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MINDING THEIR BUSINESS

STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS
SETTING THEMSELVES UP FOR
POST-GRAD SUCCESS

BY **BRADLEY JONES**
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COLLEGE IS FULL OF QUESTIONS THAT DETERMINE OUR FATE FOR YEARS TO COME. THE BIGGEST QUESTION OF THEM ALL MAY BE, "HOW AM I GOING TO MAKE MONEY AFTER COLLEGE?" WHILE SOME ARE STILL SEARCHING FOR AN ANSWER, A NUMBER OF IOWA STATE STUDENTS HAVE GOTTEN A HEAD START ON THE PROCESS.

Senior Devin Wilmott began working toward owning her own business her sophomore year of college. After her struggles with excessive exercise and eating disorders, Wilmott realized that her fitness is about more than achieving a look and wanted to share this with others.

"I wanted to help people feel better about themselves. This shouldn't be about looks, this should be about helping people," explains Devin.

Devin held fitness camps in her hometown of Dallas, Texas while visiting her mom over her during the summer after her sophomore year. This led to her creating social media accounts dedicated to "TrainWithDev." Within two years, the idea grew into a successful health and fitness business where she helps clients take small steps toward their fitness goals with healthy eating and training for their body type. Her most recent venture is her own supplement company called I Conquer Everything Labs LLC. She says her motivation comes from being inspired by watching her parents grow from having nothing to owning their own businesses.

"I don't feel I deserve to be successful and that is what drives me. Everyday I wake up with the mindset that, at the end of the day, no one is going to stop me," she says. "When I see other

people grow, I think to myself, 'Why can't I do the same thing?'"

Senior Teodoro Mefalopulos believes to be a successful entrepreneur, you have to be willing to give things up.

"There isn't enough time in the day to do everything," he explains. "My sacrifice was going out. I've never been into that lifestyle. For others it may be something else, but there is always a sacrifice to be made."

While in high school, Mefalopulos came up with the idea to sell T-shirts to his classmates. Expecting to sell a few, he was shocked to have sold out in a day. He continued to make school shirts for his classmates as well as making custom shirts. This gradually turned into a clothing line, Vyb. Due to creative differences, he has now left the company behind.

"I learned to not make your business your passion," said Mefalopulos. "Once you make it your passion, you are going to start hating it and you won't have an interest in. Make it something you are interested in and something that provides a challenge everyday."

He went on to start Directed By Creatives, a video production company. He loves that the company is less about making a profit and more about working with others toward a common goal.

Having a business isn't all about having a well known brand — for some it is about making a little money from a hobby. Junior Jeilah Seely took her passion for art and her drawing skills and used it to make a little extra cash to help get her through school. She got her start illustrating for a retired lawyer who was writing a book.

"HE ENDED UP PAYING ME OVER THREE TIMES WHAT I CHARGED HIM. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF WOW, I MIGHT BE PRETTY GOOD AT THIS," she says.


After this, Seely started a facebook page for selling art.

"Most of what I get from the art goes toward the art. Whatever's left goes towards school." Though she hasn't sold much and is unsure about the future of this business, she plans on sticking with it for a while and seeing where it takes her.

Seely, Wilmott and Mefalopulos all have learned a lot of do's and don'ts when starting your own business. As far as finances, Wilmott believes that something you do is invest in yourself and have a "dream fund," or "setting aside money that goes toward your dream." She advises resisting the temptation to spend anything from the dream fund because "once you take a little, you will start to get greedy." She has learned to keep her business and personal assets separate as well as to live below her means.

"Though my business is growing, I'm living off of a college student budget," Wilmott explains.

Seely says she has learned how to balance her time between school, work, her social life and working on her art. "It becomes easier when you work for yourself and have your own schedule. For example, if I know I'm going to have a busy week ahead of me, I avoid painting during that time."

Treating people with respect is important to Mefalopulos. He was influenced by Sir Richard Branson, a billionaire who has made his fortunes from selling customer service. "I believe there is a correlation between treating people well and success. [Richard Branson] treats his employees well which in turn treat employees better. I think that's an important thing to keep in mind whenever I hire someone — there is a certain return when someone is working for you and they are happy doing it." 



DEVIN WILLMONT, WHO RUNS "TRAINWITHDEV," AND I CONQUER EVERYTHING LABS, LLC, IN HER APARTMENT'S FITNESS CENTER.